

LAURA AND AUGUSTUS,

A N

AUTHENTIC STORY.

LAURA AND AUGUSTUS

A. M.

AUTHENTIC STONE



LAURA AND AUGUSTUS.

LETTER I.

Grenada.

MISS LEVISON TO MISS BYNG.

HEAVEN be praised! your friend;
my dear Cecilia, has it once
more in her power to address you from
Terra firma. Words seem not suffici-
ently expressive to describe her joy on
having escaped the perils of that boif-

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terous

terous element, to whose mercy she was so lately consigned. You, my dear, having never quitted the joyous scenes of England, can form but a very imperfect idea of the sufferings of inexperienced voyagers. For the first eight days, I was incapable of quitting my cabin. Nourishment, that is, solids of every kind, my stomach resisted; and as for liquids, porter was the only one it would bear; and though a liquor I never touched when on shore, yet found it palatable even in the night. My father at length hit upon an expedient to procure fresh air, by having a mattress laid upon the deck for me to repose on, which soon enabled me to walk thereon, and join
in



in the amusements that our imaginations suggested.

Among our companions was a captain upon half-pay, and his wife's sister; a lively, good-natured, uneducated girl. Her story appeared to me rather mysterious. Her brother-in-law, captain Walker, introduced her to us at Portsmouth under the name of Miss Westley. But about a month after we had been on board, broad hints were given both by the captain and lady, that were Miss reversed into Mrs. it would not be misapplied. This, you must naturally imagine, raised our curiosity; and at length, after much entreaty, she was prevailed on to declare her real situation; a narrative of

which follows. In the village where she resided lived a Mr. Anderson, an apothecary. This gentleman had an only son, who, it seems, had long felt a strong prepossession in Miss Nancy's favour: it was mutual. Hitherto the youth suppressed his desire to announce his passion to his father; however, young Æsculapius, unable any longer to retain the weighty secret, like a dutiful son, resolved to make him his confidant. But, cruel to tell, their hearts by no means sympathised: for though the lady possessed youth and good nature, and was in every respect what her lover could wish, yet there were no recommendations to the more provident father; with whom, had she been endowed with all the virtues and
graces,

graces, a want of fortune made it his duty (in his opinion) to oppose the measure.

He peremptorily refused his concurrence; and at the same time informed his son of his having received overtures from farmer Ploughshare, who would give his daughter Jenny two hundred pounds on her marriage, and a reversion of three hundred more at his death. He therefore expected, that if he wished to be called his son, he would, without further delay, withdraw his addresses from Miss Westley, and transfer them to Miss Ploughshare. In vain did the lover plead his passion to an inexorable father. The poor youth flew to his mistress for consolation;

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tion; instead of which he experienced what thousands have, an additional shock. Finding the house in the utmost confusion, and enquiring the cause, his beloved Nancy informed him, that her brother found it necessary to return to the West Indies, where his wife then was; and that they were to sail next week for the island of Grenada in the Collier, captain Marsh. Poor Joe, who had often heard how scarce lily-coloured females were in that part of the globe; sensible of the influence Nancy's charms had over him, much feared they might operate as powerfully on some wealthy planter; therefore thought it most advisable to secure the fair-one's hand, before she bid adieu to the chalky cliffs

of

of Albion. In consequence whereof they were privately married on the very morning of her joining our party. The parting on the husband's side, we may suppose to have been very tender and affecting: but, if one may be allowed to judge from the small traces of sorrow which appeared in the countenance of the bride upon our meeting, her heart had not felt the separation with much severity. After this history, what think you, my dear Cecilia, of our laughing companion? Is it not rather whimsical to marry a man in the morning, and set sail in the evening for a distant clime; to leave him with a prospect of never more beholding him; and yet not drop even a tear to the parting? does it not argue

an insensibility one would conceive impossible? How different were our feelings, my amiable friend, at our separation! for neither the novelty of surrounding scenes, nor the tenderness of my parents, could for one moment banish you from my thoughts. But, alas, Cecilia, what am I about! The re-tracing the last hours we spent together at Byngham Grove, bedew my cheeks and blot my paper. Shall therefore quit my pen for the present, in order to-recompose my mind: and, in obedience to your commands, will, at some future opportunity, attempt a description of this country and its inhabitants, as well as that of Madeira; which place we touched at on our passage hither.

This

This letter I shall give in charge to captain Mann, who leaves this port tomorrow. He will also present you with a few trifles, the produce of this country. He has likewise promised to get the pine-apple-rum on shore, which I have sent to your good father; well knowing it is not to be purchased in England, and not doubting but it will be very acceptable.

Neither my time nor spirits admits me to say more at present, than that I remain with unfeigned affection yours,

LAURA LEVISON.

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LETTER. II.

Bynham Grove.

MISS BYNG TO MISS LEVISON.

LAURA, my father enters my apartment, and informs me a packet sails on Wednesday for the West Indies. I gladly received the information, and am set down to scribble to my sweet friend. Here then is my ladyship, with all her apparatus, ready to thank my dear Laura for her kind remembrance. Captain Mann was himself the bearer of your affectionate letter, and delivered all the rarities you sent with the greatest punctuality. The pine-apple-rum, my father

ther declares, is the best he ever tasted; and, be assured, repeatedly drinks my dear girl's health. Soon after the honest skipper had left me (who, by the by, is a smart agreeable little fellow) our giddy friend, Lady Charlotte Bruce, was announced. In she came, half out of breath.—Cecilia, I have got the vapours, and am come to spend the day with you. But, bless me, what have we here; jars, bottles, flowers, and the Lord knows what. Let me see, I will take a peep into this great jar.—Stop, Lady Charlotte, when you have recovered breath, I will inform you, without your running the risk of dirting those delicate taper fingers.—Bless me, Cecilia, how teasing you grow; surely your fate will be to lead

lead apes. I suppose it is some mighty secret not worth keeping. But, however, if you are not the hardest hearted creature in the world, you will not torment me, for I am really very low-spirited to-day.—Well, Charlotte, out of compassion, I will tell you. But first inform me what shocking affair has happened to-day, that your spirits are so depressed.

You may laugh if you please, Cecilia; but I will be hanged if you would not have been vexed too, had you been in my place. That teasing little urchin of Lady Wynn's, by some accident, got hold of a beautiful fan which Harry Seymour had just brought from Paris, and snapped the sticks
7 right

right in two.—For my part, I wonder how people can pester strangers in such a manner with their brats.—Why really, Lady Charlotte, the misfortune you complain of was very mortifying. You had never yet flirted with the pretty bauble, I suppose?—No, never; it was that which mortified me.—Well then, since your Ladyship has received so great a mortification this morning, I will not keep you longer in suspense; read this letter from our friend Laura.—She is still the same good-natured giddy creature, as when at school.—There is a talk of her being married to the Honourable Mr. Seymour: he is an amiable man, and just returned from his travels. Should the match take place, they will stand, I think,

I think, as fair a chance of happiness, as any of our modern couples. She was much diverted with the account you give of Miss Westley, alias Mrs. Anderson; and declared she would freely have given up the happiness of the last masquerade, to have had the pleasure of a few jests with the *maiden wife*, as she humorously styled her. But away with such trifling, or my friend will imagine that her Cecilia has acquired some of Lady Charlotte's levity.

Need I tell you, my dear Laura, how much we lament the want of your sweet society. For a month after the departure of my beloved companion, I wandered like a dove who had lost its mate.

mate. The fields, the groves, lost all their charms, and alike served but to nourish melancholy. My father, ever anxiously solicitous for the peace of his poor girl, insisted on my going for a fortnight to my uncle Lord T——, in Albermarle Street. You are acquainted with their mode of living, therefore will not require a sketch. I shall only say, that during my stay, I was hurried off my legs: the dissipation of a town life, ill suited with one accustomed to the calm delights of the country. How much preferable is the life of a country milk-maid, to that of a modern fine lady! The former feels not a wish to rise higher; ambition is a stranger to a rustic bosom; she has not a dread that her situation may

may be humbled ; she rises with cheerfulness to perform the duties of her station ; and, while she sits innocently milking her cow, sweetly warbles forth some simple ditty. Perhaps too, the blooming Collin, the object of her tenderest affection, beguiles the toils and fatigues of the day, by kindly partaking in them. Compare this life with that of a belle. Ambition, envy, jealousy, and pride, alternately take possession of the fair-one's breast. If she lives beyond the limits of her income, œconomy is expelled by pride, and her happiness is sacrificed to it. If she imagines her beauty will attach a Ducal Coronet, and that she may one day eclipse the lovely dutchess of Devonshire ; if her affections are fixed on

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an object whose heart is already engaged.—She flies from one public place to another, in hopes of finding that happiness she is in search of; feels herself disappointed;—returns home fatigued and jaded; and reverses the order of Nature, by turning night into day. The head ach torments her; and if left a moment to herself, is moped to death. Before the age of thirty her constitution is broken; she grows peevish, and out of humour with herself and all the world; envies every object she beholds, thinking they are possessed of that jewel, she has so long and painfully been in search of.

O happiness ! our being's end and aim !
Good, pleasure, ease, content ! whate'er thy
name :
That something still which prompts th' eternal
sigh,
For which we dare to live, or dare to die ;
Which still so near us, yet beyond us lies,
O'erlook'd, seen double, by the fool, and wise.
Plant of celestial seed ! if dropt below,
Say in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow ?

POPE.

I am called away, but will resume my
pen on my return.

I was interrupted by a visit from
Miss Sidney. You have heard, I sup-
pose, of the death of her two sisters.
The sweet girl seems much afflicted on
the occasion. How sincerely are Sir
Charles and Lady Sidney, to be pi-
tied !

tied! Though, indeed, if we may judge from Lady Sidney's conduct, she must have possessed a very small degree of maternal feelings, or could never have consigned such delicate blossoms to the nourishing hands of strangers, to embrace infamy and shame! Gracious heaven! what must be the reflections of that woman who breaks through every law, human and divine, to gratify an adulterous love! But as this subject, my dear Laura, requires a more able pen than mine, to treat it with the severity it so justly merits, I shall bid it adieu; and content myself with wishing, that all happiness may attend the sister of my heart; and that she may ever entertain the

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same lively friendship for me in her breast, which is implanted for her in that of

CECILIA BYNG.

LETTER III.

Grenada.

MISS LEVISON NO MISS BYNG.

ACCORDING to promise, my dear friend, I resume my pen, to attempt a description of where I have been, and what I have seen, since my departure from your peaceful abode.

But

But I fear, Cecilia, however good my inclination may be, in endeavouring to amuse the leisure hour of a beloved friend, I shall fall far short of my wishes. For thy Laura feels herself so meek a novice in the descriptive art, that she fears her pen may excite disgust, instead of giving that pleasure she would wish to impart. However, instead of offering any further apology, I will proceed.

In about a month after we sailed from the *Albion coast*, we came within sight of the Island of Madeira. To express my joy upon once more viewing land, after being so long at the mercy of the waves, is almost impossible: my heart dilated with pleasure,

sure, when a sailor from the top-mast announced the sight of land. So extravagant was my joy, I could have hugged the honest tar for his intelligence; and gave him a dollar to drink my health on landing. Quite elated, I descended to my cabin to adjust my attire; which important point was scarcely finished, when the gentlemen came down to inform us, that a boat was arrived along-side the ship to convey us on shore. Quickly was I on deck; but, gracious heaven, what were my sensations, when, on looking into the boat that was to convey us, I beheld three or four Portuguese fellows more than half naked! In an instant my neck and face were suffused with blushes; trembling, I scarce knew
which

which way to turn my eyes; fearful of venturing myself near such monsters in appearance. Figure to yourself, my friend, my perplexity at that moment. But here my terror was not to cease; for, to my great amazement and dread, we had scarce proceeded ten yards before two or three huge oxen were brought, and fastened to the boat with chains, to drag us out of the sea upon the bay; the surf in that island running so exceeding high, that without the friendly assistance of these cattle, you would be continually driven back.

The agitation my spirits had experienced nearly exhausted my strength; so that, on landing, my feet almost refused their accustomed aid; and I

should doubtless have made but a stumbling piece of work of it, had I not accepted the proffered arm of Mr. Fanburg.

This gentleman, who seemed possessed of the greatest humanity, kindly endeavoured to support my drooping spirits, by offering me every consolation in his power. Thus situated, I could not help regretting my departure from good Old England; wishing myself once more in the peaceful regions of Queen Square, safely lodged under the protecting care of my indulgent friends, the Mrs. S——ns'. But my desire being vain, recollection told me it was prudent to submit with patience.

We were conducted to the house of Mr. Mansel, a merchant, whose politeness and hospitality were eminently conspicuous. His mansion is spacious and handsome; and his manner of living corresponds with his fortune, which is immense. During our stay at this house, there was a constant succession of company. Our parties consisted entirely of gentlemen; for there are very few European ladies residents upon this island, which is a circumstance that astonishes me much; as not only the climate is delightful, but their mode of living very sumptuous.

The trade of this place, you know, consists mostly in wines, it abounding in vintages. But the soil is so excessive
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luxuriant, that it yields not only the produce of the western clime, but also those of Europe. The only inconvenience, in my opinion, attending the ladies of this town, is the badness of the streets; which, being paved with small rough pebbles, renders walking, though not impracticable, very unpleasant. But the country, which is a paradise of sweets, amply compensates the above disadvantage. The hedges are formed of roses, mirtle, and citron, which here grow wild, planted by the hand of Nature. Fruits of all kind are in the greatest profusion, especially peaches and strawberries; grapes, I need not name. The onions of this island are remarkably fine, and grow to a prodigious size; they are, I believe,

lieve, frequently imported to England for sale, as well as presents.

The natives of this sweet spot are Portuguese; a set of people, to me, the most disgusting; they are the filthiest-looking beings eyes ever beheld; their mode of dress the most uncouth. The men never walk out without great-coats, though the weather is suffocating; and swords, though they apprehend no danger. And custom has so ordered it, that an Englishman cannot stir without taking his sword as his companion.

The women of this country are in general very plain, their complexions remarkably fallow, and their dress
very

very singular, not at all calculated to prejudice one in their favour. I do not remember ever to have seen one Portuguese female out of mourning since my arrival in this part of the world. A black crape gown and petticoat, with the skirt of the former drawn over the head, so that no part of the face is to be seen excepting the tip of the nose, is their usual habili-ment ; in which attire they parade the streets, and sit in their churches. How they decorate themselves when at home, I cannot say ; but this is certain, their appearance abroad is truly forbidding.

Their cathedrals may be justly styled magnificent. One morning as Mr. Mansel, Mr. Fanburg, and myself,
were

were amusing ourselves with viewing the different buildings in the town, observing one of the churches open, we instantly made up to it, and on entering, found it was their hour of worship. The women, who were all seated on the ground, on our entering set up a tittering, which surprized me not a little, as it expressed an indecent levity, which I should have thought the place they were then in, and the strictness of their religious duties forbade. We had scarce entered the isle of this beautiful edifice, before a man came up and addressed us in the Portuguese language; when imagining I had committed some error, I immediately quitted the place. But upon enquiring of the gentlemen what the man said, was told

told they never remembered the governor to have behaved with so much politeness to any stranger before; for that Monsieur le Gouverneur had sent his compliments to la dame Anglaise, and that as no person was admitted to approach with their heads covered, if she would do them the honour to take off her hat, and bow her knee to the blessed Virgin as she ascended up the isle, her company would be esteemed a favour. Upon this polite invitation, I resolved not to be out-done in the etiquette of good breeding, and indeed looked upon it as a compliment due to the governor's civility: though my hair was not a little derangé, I pulled off my hat, and re-entered, bowing my knee all the way, till I arrived at
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the altar, to the no small diversion of the female spectators. After kneeling to the Virgin Mary and bowing, I rose up, courtesied to the governor, and withdrew; much pleased at having got rid of such an awkward piece of business.

Their funeral rites are singular and solemn; and having seen an infant's, will give you a description of the ceremony. The child was laid in a coffin made of paste-board covered with crimson velvet, bound with gold-lace. The lid of the coffin was thrown open, and discovered the babe strewed with the choicest flowers. Six priests attended, with about fifty little boys dressed in white surplices, bearing in
their

their hands wax-tapers, and chanting in the most heavenly measure; the mourners followed. By this procession was the little innocent conducted to the ground, where when it arrived, it was taken out of the coffin and laid in the earth; which last ceremony shocked me greatly (as it would any other European) whose mind was not familiarized to this mode of interment.

A few days after the above scene, I was witness to one which far surpassed any thing your imagination can form, or so indifferent a pen as mine paint. It was one of their grand festivals, called Saint Clara's day: we were told that every convent would be thrown open, as well as their cathedrals, our
party

party therefore determined to sally forth, and satisfy their curiosity; we visited their different churches, as on that day grand mass is held; from mass the priests, and two or three hundred little boys, marched two and two, as in the solemnization of the before-mentioned burial, accompanied by all ranks in the same order, chanting, and kneeling every ten yards as they proceeded. The nuns at the different convents stood ranged with small baskets of flowers in their hands, consisting of roses, jasmine, and full-blown myrtle, with which they strewed the priests as they entered; none but them being permitted to go within the gates. However, having followed the procession pretty closely, we did

not escape their odoriferous favors. The streets also were scattered with the sweetest blossoms. In short, your ideas, my dear Cecilia, must form but an imperfect picture of the magnificence and beauty of this ceremony. My pen is inadequate to the task I have undertaken. And my fingers are so cramped as to oblige me to lay it down.

Having contracted an acquaintance with one of the nuns the day preceding my quitting Madeira, I received from her as a present a box of candied citron, a work basket and flowers of her own workmanship, with a letter containing the history of her life. The symmetry of her figure,
and

and the melancholy imprinted on her languid countenance, claimed my attention: when I first beheld her, she was among the number of those poor deluded wretches whom I mentioned as being ranged at the gates of their different convents to strew the priests with flowers, prepossessed in her favour from her amiable appearance, I resolved to take an early opportunity of re-visiting the monastery in which she was a captive. Accordingly, in a few days, I appeared at the grate, and desiring to see some of the gew-gaws they usually make for sale; one of the nuns retired, and in a few moments returned accompanied by the identical person I wished so much to see. Having finished my purchases,

we entered into a conversation in the French language, which she spoke with great elegance and propriety. I could not avoid expressing my surprise, that one who seemed so well qualified to shine in the politest circles should prefer a cloister at so early an age, thereby secluding herself from the world, and all the joys of society; looking at me, she sighed; then turned her head aside to wipe the falling tear. My heart was melted! it felt the solitude of a friend. At length, with eyes overcharged, she articulated these words: Alas! Madam, you see before you one, whose sorrows admit of no palliative,—the greatest blessing I can hope for is death. To that happy period I look with anxious impatience,

'tis the only friend that can restore my lost peace ! Here my eyes could not withhold testifying how much my heart commiserated her misfortunes. We were interrupted by the prayer-bell summoning her ; but I have frequently visited her since. My feelings would not suffer me to take a personal farewell of her ; therefore, wrote a few lines bidding her adieu, and requesting her friendly remembrance of me in her prayers.

How sincerely, my Cecilia, do I pity those wretched females, whose lot it is to spend their bloom within the solitary walls of a monastery ; basely secluded from all the joys of friendship and a virtuous love ! And should fate

ever throw an object in her way worthy of her attention, after the irrevocable vow had passed her lips, what must be her misery ! despair, and sharp repentance, must be her fate.—Ye superstitious fair, could you but view the misery which reigns within the dreary walls of a cloister, so many of you would not so eagerly embrace the veil.

Gracious heaven ! defend me, and the friend of my heart, from so cruel a state !—Merciful Father ! look with an eye of pity on the sufferings of the fair Eliza.

Alas ! my love, I cannot proceed. The afflictions of Eliza demand the

sacrifice of a few tears. The dear girl's story accompanies this, which, if I do not strangely deceive myself, will draw a tear of sympathy from your dove-like eyes. With tenderest wishes for your happiness, I subscribe myself
yours sincerely,

LAURA LEVISON.

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LETTER IV.

Madeira, Convent of —

ELIZA TO MISS LEVISON.

ENCOURAGED by your kind and flattering friendship, and impelled by motives of the sincerest esteem and affection for one so truly amiable, I take up my pen to assure you, my sweet sympathetic friend, how severely I shall feel the loss of your condoling conversation. Your company has been the only solace my afflictions have received, since my residence in these gloomy cells. Your humanity in devoting so much of your
time

time to so melancholy an object deserves a no less grateful return.

Often has Miss Levison hinted her wish to know what had plunged me into my present melancholy, and driven me from the commerce of mankind. She shall be gratified; and what my tongue refused to utter, my pen shall truly delineate. This paper shall transmit a faithful account of the source of all my griefs. I already feel the pangs I shall endure, in reciting my misfortunes. But 'tis a sacrifice due to your generous friendship. Perhaps too my sins are such that require many tears as an atonement.

'Tis grief, pure grief, that does my tears excite,
And real sorrow does each line indite.

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Forgive me, my sweet friend, my tardiness ; thought wanders up and down. Indeed a retrospection so agitates me, that I must lay down my pen, but will resume it when more composed.

Tears have relieved me ; therefore I will without further digression proceed.

Fontainbleau was the place of my birth, and in giving me life my unfortunate mother expired. She was a native of Italy. I was educated at the convent of the Noblesse in Paris, and received every advantage which the attendance of the most renowned masters could give. At the age of sixteen I quitted my retirement, and resided
with

with Madame la Comtesse de Davenport ; a lady possessed of all those amiable accomplishments which add dignity to rank, and heighten the lustre of the most exalted station. To her care was I consigned by my dying parent. This lady had been the friend and companion of my mother's childhood. But on marrying Monsieur le Comte de Davenport she quitted Italy, and resided at Fontainbleau. The friends for some time kept up a regular correspondence, till my mother, for what reason was then unknown, dropp'd all intercourse with the amiable Comtesse. Chance, however, brought about a meeting (though a shocking one) between the friends.

As

As Madame de Davenport was one day walking by a small retired wood, near Fontainebleau, she espied a pretty cottage at a little distance. The neatness of the building tempted her to enter, the internal elegance and simplicity of which amazed her; for a few moments, she was lost in wonder and astonishment. But the piercing cry of anguish moving her attention, she followed the impulse of humanity, and entering the chamber from whence the voice proceeded, beheld a lady in the pangs of child-birth, she approached to tender her services. But, good heavens! what words can express her amazement and horror, at beholding in the distressed female her lost friend Adelaide. She screamed, and fainted; her

her scream attracted the attention of my mother, who, on recognising her, was no less agitated than pleased. The sudden surprise, however, hastened her pains, and before the Comtesse was well recovered of her fit, I was presented to the world; my unhappy parent had but just power to recommend me to the protection of her friend, before death closed her eyes. My beloved guardian, who had ever felt the tenderest affection for my ill-fated mother, sincerely lamented her untimely death; and, by her outward garb, paid that compliment to her memory which she judged their former friendship demanded.

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From that memorable day, until I had reached my eleventh year, I constantly resided under the same roof with my noble benefactress: at which period, the Comte took a whim into his head of visiting Europe, which obliged my generous friend to place me at the before-mentioned monastery, where I remained till I arrived at an age proper to be introduced into life.

Happy period! blest moments of innocence! ah, whither are ye fled! Why did I quit the calm retirement of a cloister? the innocent conversation of Vestals, to mix in the gay and noisy world; a world made up of sorrow, pain, and disappointment? Why did not one grave receive the wretched
child

child with her unfortunate parent? Why was I left to contend with the storms of adverse fate? Alas, I rave.— Pardon, heaven! none should presume to arraign thy providence; but with submission bow their knees to thy all-wise decrees.

My highly-valued friend the Comtesse transferred the tenderness she bore my dear departed mother to her helpless orphan; and made it her study to drive from my mind all thoughts concerning the mystery of my birth: young and thoughtless, and surrounded by flatterers, she found that no difficult task. A twelvemonth was passed in uninterrupted scenes of joy and festivity. The Comte and Comtesse having

ing no children, and shewing a great partiality for me, it was generally believed I should be their heir, which drew about me many admirers; several of whom made their application to the Comtesse. But as my heart felt no prepossession in favour of any particular object, I requested her Ladyship not to press me upon so disagreeable a subject; assuring her my situation under her protection was so perfectly agreeable to my wishes, that I was apprehensive, after having so long been accustomed to her tender indulgence, my disposition might resist the tyranny of a husband.

A few days after the above discourse, the good-natured Comtesse entered my dressing-

dressling-room, and, laughing, said, Ah, Mademoiselle, we have an English nobleman to take soupe with us to day, that will, I guess, put all your boasted indifference to the test: but however, my lovely child, do not despair; who knows what effect your innocent smiles and dimpled cheeks may have upon him?

I knew not how it was, my sweet friend, but certainly that day I took uncommon pains in decorating the few charms Nature has bestowed upon me; and if my glass deserved confidence, I never appeared to greater advantage. I entered the room in which the company were assembled with a heart palpitating with expectation. The Comte

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looked

looked at me with a significant glance; spread his hand upon his breast, and heaved a sigh. I felt the force of his meaning, and, mortified at being discovered to possess so large a share of vanity, I blushed. At that instant a domestic announced the Marquis of C——. The Comte having introduced his Lordship to the Comtesse, presented me to him as his adopted daughter. Never did I feel myself so embarrassed as at that moment; and it was considerably augmented by the archness of Monsieur's looks. When dinner was served, it was with difficulty I performed the trifling etiquettes of the table. Indeed the amiable Englishman engrossed my whole attention, while the Comte increased my awkwardness
not

not a little, by enquiring several times if I felt myself indisposed; it availed nothing assuring him of my health. At length, to my great satisfaction, the carriages arrived that were to convey us to the opera. This afforded me some relief, as it took off the attention of the Comte, who seemed determined to make me suffer for my former indifference.

I fear I tire you, my charming friend, in being so circumstantial, but rely on your goodness for pardon. I feel a dawn of happiness in retracing the first interviews I had with my beloved William. From that day the Marquis became a constant visitor. He attended me to every place of polite resort;

was my constant partner at assemblies; we seemed to live but in the presence of each other. He knew my mysterious birth, and the dependant state I was in; but they made no impression on my generous lover: his heart was superior to such sordid, narrow, sentiments. Our love was pure and disinterested; our souls appeared formed for each other. On our first interview, our minds secretly acknowledged its counterpart.

Three months were passed in the mutual exchange of love, when the Marquis, impatient to make me his by the tenderest tie, wrote to his father, not in the least doubting his concurrence, as no objection could be made

to fortune, my kind benefactors declaring their noble designs in my favour.

At length the wished-for answer arrived: but, good heavens, what words can paint my feelings on receiving the letter from the hands of the Comtesse instead of my amiable lover! My friend informed me, that the Marquis was a little indisposed, and could not wait upon me himself, but that the Comte was gone to visit him. At that instant my heart foreboded my misfortune, and with trembling hands I opened the fatal letter: on reading which, I fainted.

The Duke declared his disapprobation of his son's marrying a foreigner; and at the same time he desired his immediate return to England, informing him he had engaged his hand to an heiress of immense possessions, and a noble birth: and as a mark of his duty, commanded him to give up all further connexions with me.

That day and night tears and lamentations were my companions. The next morning my lover appeared; but, O heavens, how changed! No longer the bloom of health sat on his countenance. Pale and dejected he entered my dressing room. I arose, and, assuming all the fortitude I was mistress of, requested him to be seated; I told him,

him, since we must part, I begged this might be our last interview: as my attachment to him was too sincere, to wish him to deviate from the paths rigid duty had chalked out for him. I desired him to root me from his memory, and to obey his Grace, by giving his hand to my fortunate rival; and entreated him to destroy the little portrait of me (which he constantly wore hung next his heart) as it could but serve to encrease his affliction, and might be a means of creating jealous doubts in the breast of his future lady, should she ever chance to see it. These requests, I confess, cost my heart the severest pangs; nor were they made without many interruptions. At the last words, my tears

would no longer be restrained. The Marquis threw himself at my feet, and with every kind expression which the tenderest love could dictate, tried to sooth my grief, though at the same time he himself stood in as great need of consolation.

He pressed me to receive his hand before he quitted France: swore no power on earth should force him to marry any other woman but myself. This request I peremptorily refused. At last it was concluded, that, instead of returning to England as he had purposed, he should write to the Duke, and inform him of his aversion to the match his Grace had mentioned; and his determination of never quitting
France

France until holy laws had made me his. This letter was accompanied with another from the Comte de Davenport, offering the most generous terms which his friendship and affection for me could dictate. These epistles were answered by a polite refusal to the Comte, and a peremptory denial to his son. He also informed the Marquis, that he should set out immediately for Paris, and expected to be with him pretty near as soon as his letters.

My amiable William upon this claimed my promise; and, not imagining I should act in the least derogatory to the delicacy of my sex, as having the sanction of my noble benefactors, I yielded him my consent. It
was

58 LAURA AND AUGUSTUS.

was agreed that my lover should immediately apply to the English ambassador's chaplain, with whom he was upon intimate terms; and that, lest the Duke should arrive as soon as he had predicted, the ceremony should be performed the following morning. Fatal morning! mysterious heaven! I can no more, alas! my heart is bursting.

I have knelt; I have prayed the blessed Virgin to give me fortitude to proceed in my horrid tale. The clergyman was pronouncing his last benediction, when in rushed a man with dishevelled hair, and all the horrors of despair and anguish painted in his countenance: it was the Duke. My husband.

husband seized my hand; we knelt; he clasped the knees of his father; he begged his forgiveness; he implored his blessing. But the unhappy parent was incapable of a reply; he sat like one stupified. At length he articulated these few words:—Both—both my children; — *brother* — and the name of *sister* died upon his tongue. Nature was exhausted; he fainted. My husband ran to support his venerable parent. The agitation of my spirits threw me into hysterics: my William was almost distracted. Turn either side, he beheld the two dearest persons to him on earth, in the most distressed state. The Duke was conveyed to bed; and, on recovering his senses, desired pen and ink to be brought him; when,

when, supported by pillows, he wrote the following letter :

To the Right Hon. Marquis of C—.

AS I feel the sands of life are running low, my beloved son, and as it is uncertain how long it may please the Almighty to prolong my days, I must endeavour, while I am able, to render you all the reparation that lies in the power of thy wretched father ; and however painful and mortifying the recital of my guilt must be, yet it is the only method left me to save you from inevitable destruction ; therefore, without repining, will perform the task. My marriage with your mother C——, was a match of interest,

interest, not of love. You, my son, was the only fruit of this union. About two years after your birth, I quitted England with a design of visiting some of the foreign courts. The Dutcheſs purpoſed accompanying me; but as her Grace, though an amiable woman, never poſſeſſed my love, I made ſome frivolous excuſe; and ſhe being of a mild pacific diſpoſition, ſuffered me to depart without her. To my ſhame, I muſt confeſs, I made this excellent woman the worſt of huſbands. On my leaving England I viſited France, and proceeded to Italy, where I became acquainted with the daughter of a nobleman of that place, her name was Adelaide. We conceived a mutual partiality for each other, and
for

for some time carried on the tenderest correspondence. At length the busy tongue of Fame informed her of the duplicity of my conduct: she being assured that I was already united to an amiable and deserving woman in my native country.

The next time I visited her at her convent, she related to me the above intelligence. At first I attempted to treat it as a groundless report, raised by some wretch who envied my happiness. But the sweet maid was not to be duped by so evasive an answer: and soon reading in my countenance the truth I wished to conceal, forbade my future attendance at the grate. But to keep you, my son, no longer
in

in suspense, suffice it to say, love got the mastery of prudence. I swore to abandon my friends and country; and as our stay in Italy would be madness, to make France the place of my residence. Heaven was called to witness, that I should ever look upon her as my lawful wife, and that it should be the whole study of my life to make her forget those advantages she had for my sake renounced; that every art should be used to make her retirement sweet; and that every succeeding day in her charming society would bring forth an increase of felicity, though even in a desert. I exhausted all the eloquence of love, in pressing the lovely maid to elope; and was so successful, that in less than a month we were settled

settled at a pretty neat cottage near Fontainebleau. In this beautiful recess we lived for six months: at length, weary of solitude, which by no means suited my disposition, being naturally of a gay, roving, turn of mind, and cloyed by possession, determined, villain as I was, to abandon the gentle Adelaide; leaving her mistress of valuables to a considerable amount, and of the habitation we then lived in, which I had before presented to her. At this period the unfortunate girl was far advanced in her pregnancy; nevertheless, my heart was rendered so callous by frequent seduction, that humanity was banished, and, like a true libertine, was so ungenerous as to conclude, that any other fool would be as welcome

welcome as myself, what little partiality might remain, or recollection obtrude, dissipation very soon obliterated.

About twelve months after my return to England, your mother falling into a decline was ordered to the South of France. As I accompanied her, on my arrival in that kingdom, curiosity led me to send my valet to Fontainebleau, to enquire after the fair Italian. On his return, he informed me, that the lady had died in child-bed, and that the Comtesse de Davenport had taken the little girl under her own protection, and treated the infant with every mark of maternal tenderness. This satisfied my feelings (if I had any) as I well-

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remem-

membered the friendship which had subsisted between the amiable Comtesse and Adelaide. And though all intercourse of letters had for some time been dropped, owing to my machinations; yet had I so great a reliance on the exalted sentiments of that lady, that my breast harboured not the least doubt of her tenderness to the orphan of her departed friend.

Heaven alone can witness for me the remorse I feel for my past crimes! and what adds to the poignancy of my grief, is the misery into which my unpardonable folly has plunged my unfortunate children.

Had

Had not shame tied my tongue, my lord, your first address should have been answered by a full avowal of my guilt.

But, gracious heaven! when I consider that one moment's delay would have sunk thee, William, and thy wretched sister into infamy, and the greatest gulph of misery, I tremble at myself, and reason can with difficulty retain her seat.

O! my son, my daughter, my beloved children, pardon thy repentant father. Do not curse his memory. And, O! thou blest shade of my Adelaide! thou injured innocent, rise not in judgment against thy base betrayer.

Heaven will, I trust, in his great mercy receive my sincere contrition ! Nature is spent ; farewell, my children. The blessing of thy dying repentant father attend ye.

L——

ELIZA IN CONTINUATION.

THE above letter, my dear Miss Levison, was not written without many interruptions ; the shock my unhappy parent had received was too much for one at his advanced time of life. Nature sunk under the blow, and a few hours ended his existence.

As to myself, and my beloved William, we lay eight days bereft of our senses.

Happy

Happy interval! at that moment we felt not the horrors of our situation. My unhappy brother was the first who recovered the use of his reason; he insisted upon being conveyed into my apartment. The wretched youth vowed to watch the last embers of expiring life in his beloved Eliza.—He swore to follow me to the grave, that one tomb should unite us. In this distracted state did he remain, until at length it pleased the Almighty Disposer of events to restore me to reason, and a just sense of my misery. On the first dawn of recollection, I beheld my darling brother with the fondest solicitude hanging over me, watching the extinction or renewal of life.—But, good God! so altered, the sha-

dow only of his former self, such wretchedness seemed depicted in his once blooming countenance, that I was near relapsing into my former state of insensibility ; but the caresses of the dear youth soon brought me to a just sense of my unhappy situation. And when the idea of incest rushed across my mind ; I pushed him from me with the utmost horror ! To paint the looks of my distracted William at that instant is impossible ! Permit me to draw a veil over this heart-rending scene, and for a few moments to lay down my pen.

I am now more calm, and will therefore hasten, while able, to the conclusion of my melancholy tale.

My

My kind benefactors insisted on an immediate separation. To attempt a description of our parting would be vain. Your feeling heart will best paint our mutual agony! My beloved brother, recommending his ill-fated sister to their tender care and affection, departed for his native country, in a state of the most poignant wretchedness.

The Comte and Comtesse, thinking that any correspondence would but serve to nourish our grief, strenuously forbade any intercourse whatever, until time and absence had rooted out that cruel passion which predominated alike in both.

F 4

I pleaded

I pleaded hard with my friends for their permission to retire to a monastery, there to hide my sorrows from the prying world; but in vain: my brother on his departure had made it his request, and had gained a solemn promise from them, to use every art to keep me from so great a sacrifice, as my beloved William styled it.

For two months I dragged on a wretched existence at Montpelier, to which place my more than parents had removed me for the benefit of air; as I was declared to be far gone in a decline. Alas! where is that medicine to be found that can cure a wounded mind! The air has no effect upon a broken heart. However, my
ge-

generous guardians, wishing to try every means to save my miserable life, called a consultation of physicians, who gave it as their opinion that the last recourse which they had left was a voyage to some of the West-India settlements.

My friends, anxious for my recovery, determined to send me to Madeira, having a relation settled in that place. They would have accompanied me themselves, but the amiable Comtesse was afflicted with a disorder, which a sea voyage would have rendered fatal. Our parting was mournful. But I had survived a still more cruel separation. O! my brother, my—gracious heaven, pardon thy weak servant!

A wo-

A woman who had been my nurse and her husband were my attendants. We arrived after a prosperous voyage at the house of Monsieur Fontaine, whose family received me with the utmost tenderness; I tried to make Madame Fontaine sensible of the necessity there was of my taking the veil; and, as that lady was one of those who are bigoted to their religion, easily succeeded.

She declared, that she looked upon my misfortunes to have been a call from heaven; that, by thus sacrificing the world to God, I should by that means wash out the offences of my unfortunate mother. As to my father, he was a heretic. I must confess, the
free-

freedom she used in speaking of my unfortunate parents made me so unhappy, that I mourned their misfortunes in private, and shed a torrent of tears to their memory.

About a month after I had resided at Monsieur Fontaine's, I found means to elude the vigilance of my nurse, and with the assistance of Madame Fontaine entered this retreat; where I wait with patience for that happy moment which will free me from a load of misery. I feel, I have not long to remain a burden in this life. The image of my ill-fated brother is ever present to my mind; and what is become of the unfortunate youth, heaven only knows!

The

The only wish I have now remaining, is, that my wretched body may be conveyed to Europe, and laid in that vault which will receive the remains of my dear William. To this purpose I have written to my affectionate friend the Comtesse, and trust, this my last request will be fulfilled. I am now worse than I have yet been; my strength is nearly spent; exhausted nature cannot hold out much longer. I feel the vital spark expiring; a little longer, and I shall be no more.—Adieu, my charming friend; permit my memory to retain a place in your heart; and that Providence may shower down his choicest blessings on your head, and keep you in his watchful

ful care, is the fervent prayer of the
unfortunate——

ELIZA.

LETTER V.

Grenada.

MISS LEVISON TO MISS BYNG.

THE day after my receiving the
unfortunate Eliza's packet, I
sailed from that delightful spot. But,
before my departure, intreated Miss
Solley, a young lady of Madeira, to
seize every opportunity to inform me
of the health of the sweet sufferer,
which

which she has promised to do. We arrived at the end of our perigrinations on the first of September, and landed without any of those terrors I had encountered at the before mentioned island. We were immediately conducted on horse-back to my father's estate, attended by a number of gentlemen, inhabitants of this place, who came on board to compliment us. The slaves, having received intelligence of our arrival, had assembled themselves at the dwelling-house, to welcome our return. Their delight at beholding their young Miffey (as they styled me) was great. As for my part, I had not the least recollection of any of them, having left the West-Indies at four years of age.

Figure

Figure to yourself between two and three hundred black men and women, gathered together, about your friend, and expressing the most extravagant joy, which their faithful bosoms could dictate.

I really was lost in amazement, and was heartily glad when I was released from so Babylonian a noise, as it was late before this ceremony was ended. I soon retired to my chamber, and being fatigued with the hurry of the day, my senses were quickly steeped in forgetfulness.

The next morning my sight was enchanted with the beauties of the surrounding prospect. The house stands
upon

upon the summit of a hill ; at the back of the dwelling you command a most extensive view of the towns called Marque and La Baye, with all the shipping. In the front gallery you behold the greatest variety of wood and water you can imagine ; with a number of gentlemen's plantations scattered about.

The fruits of this island are very fine, and in great abundance, and grow in general spontaneous. Every kind of live stock we have in the utmost plenty ; beef and veal excepted, which is seldom to be met with, unless a proprietor kills them upon his own estate, and then a joint of either is esteemed a genteel present.

The people are hospitable to a folly, and live in a very superfluous style; indeed, they in general keep up an appearance far beyond their income; therefore (what with the loss of negroes, cattle, bad crops, and their own extravagance) frequently the wealthiest planters in a few years are reduced to a perfect state of indigence.

We have several agreeable French families among us, which I esteem a very great acquisition, as there are very few European women settled here; I cannot style them ladies, for they are in general (one or two excepted) the refuse of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

We are the only English family that visit among the French; I like their society much, they are a lively, good-natured, generous people, and make it their study to oblige and entertain you. Sincerity I never trouble my head about, it is not their characteristic; and indeed deceit is a coin so current among all ranks of men, that they who flatter themselves with finding a friend in every acquaintance, may rest assured that they will, like poor David Simple, be most woefully disappointed. For my own part, I behold hypocrisy dealt with so lavishly a hand from one to another, after the warmest professions of esteem and regard, that 'tis with difficulty I refrain from laughing, when the same pro-

fusion

fusion of words are offered to me: the smile that plays on my countenance, upon these occasions is usually construed as the effusions of gratitude, and an acceptance of their proffered friendship; while in my heart, I most cordially despise the speaker. For how few are there in the world, that know the just etymology of the word friendship! methinks 'tis a word that conveys so extensive a meaning, that there are few hearts capable of defining it.

A generous friendship no cold medium knows,
Burns with one love, with one resentment glows:
One should their passions, one their interest be,
My friend must hate the man who injures me.

GAY.

You, my Cecilia, have a mind replete with all those noble and gene-

rous sentiments, and a heart susceptible of all those delicate and refined feelings which are so great an ornament to human nature, and which alone can render friendship permanent.

But, I must now draw this scrawl to a conclusion, or shall far exceed the limits of a letter, and my packet is already swelled to a most enormous size: a vessel is just coming in, therefore will not seal this, till I know whether there is any letter from my friend.

I have received yours as expected, my sweet girl, and was highly delighted with your description of Lady Charlotte Bruce; she is a good-natured creature, and

and I believe possesses a good heart; tho' her extreme giddiness, and turn for satire, has created a doubt of that in the breast of many. Make my compliments and best wishes to her, and tell her that I sincerely hope the solemnity of matrimony may not have too powerful an effect upon her spirits.

You know not, my dear Cecilia, how tenderly I sympathise with poor Harriot Sidney; indeed I love her, she was ever of an amiable, mild disposition, and the situation of her mother must severely afflict a girl of her quick sensibility. But really divorces are now grown so frequent, that I expect shortly to see marriage totally abolished.

lished. I wish there could be some punishment invented for adultery, so as to render infidelity less common; methinks not only the women, but the men should be punished, for the fault in general originates with them. Would that our legislative power would take this hint into consideration! But as their sex is (as I have already said) the primitive cause of the disaffection of the poor females to their lords and masters, how can I be weak enough to imagine, that they will study the good of posterity in defiance to self-interest? But whither am I wandering to? diving, the men will say, beyond the depth of a feminine pen; I will therefore, with

sub-

submission, confess my presumption,
and be content in subscribing myself
your sincere and affectionate friend,

LAURA LEVISON.

P. S. A letter is just brought me
from Miss Solley; 'tis enclosed for
your perusal. You will there see that
the ill-fated Eliza is no more.

LETTER. VI.

Madeira,

MISS SCOLLEY TO MISS LEVISON.

EMBRACE this opportunity, my dear Madam, of fulfilling the promise I made you at parting, and wish it were in my power to send you more pleasing intelligence. I have called several times since your departure at the convent of ———, to enquire after the unfortunate lady you mentioned. A sight of her I never was able to gain, as I was informed by one of the sisterhood, that she had been confined to her cell for some time, and that they did not expect she could hold out

out many days longer, for that her strength seemed entirely gone, and her inside wasted away.

This answer was all the satisfaction I could gain to my repeated enquiries. About a fortnight ago I again visited the grate, in hopes of hearing a more favourable account of the unhappy lady. A nun appeared; she seemed to have been weeping. I named Eliza; and the tears streamed afresh; I reiterated my enquiries; she answered with a sigh, "She was no more; that her sorrows were now lodged within the cold and silent bosom of the grave.— She died," continued she, "as she had lived, perfectly resigned. Sister Eliza had resided among us a very short time;

but her exemplary conduct, her mild and sweet disposition, her zealous and fervent devotion, had acquired her the prayers and love of our whole sisterhood. She expired last night without a groan. Not a dry eye was to be seen within our walls. Never was suffering angel more lamented."

I have since heard, my dear Miss Levison, that interest has been made by some friends of the deceased, to have the body preserved, and sent to Europe, there to be interred.

I have now, my dear madam, obeyed your commands, and my own wishes, in giving you every information that lay in my power to procure, and am
mortified

mortified my intelligence is of so melancholy a nature ; but as the young lady's sorrows admitted of no alleviation, death must have been a welcome relief. The fair Eliza might justly be styled " The child of sorrow baptized in tears."—Believe me, madam, though I had not the pleasure of the unfortunate lady's confidence, yet do I sincerely lament her untimely fate: youth, beauty, innocence, and truth, cut off in the full pride of years. Alas, what must her unhappy brother feel ! Wretched youth, thy fate is truly deplorable ! The grave, in thy situation, must be the most welcome asylum. My heart, my dear Miss Levison, bleeds for the unhappy amiable Marquis. I sit and ruminate for hours on
the

the fate of this ill-fated pair till my spirits are so dejected, that I am rendered incapable of enjoying the sweets of society. At this moment, I feel the tear of sympathy steal down my cheek; and lest the melancholy which falls from my quill should increase your anguish, I shall take my leave, with wishing you every happiness which this mortal state will admit, and subscribe myself, with the warmest esteem for your many amiable virtues, my dear Miss Levison's sincere well-wisher,

CAROLINE SOLLEY.

L E T.

LETTER VII.

Grenada.

MISS LEVISON NO MISS BYNG.

STEALING from the noise and bustle of company, Laura flies to the bosom of friendship. Yes, my Cecilia, this epistolary converse is my greatest comfort: the continual rounds of company in which I am engaged ill suit with one of my retired, thoughtful turn of mind.

Our house swarms with visitors; I can scarce find time for a moment's reflection; their conversation fatigues me. I was necessitated to excuse my absence

absence from the card-table, by complaining of the head-ach.

The serenity of the evening is delightful ; all Nature smiles around. I am now sitting upon a large stone at the top of a gentle rising hill ; and, for a table, substitute my knee. My seat is on one side surrounded by sugar-canes, and on the other by a hedge formed of lime, orange, and pomegranate. The wild melody of Nature's foresters, the gentle cooing of the dove, with the prattling of a beautiful cascade, lulls my soul into a kind of heavenly tranquillity.

This sweet spot I have given the name of Orange Grove ; and mean to

have

have a little building erected here, where I design placing my piano forte, library, drawing and writing utensils ; which charming retirement shall be appropriated solely to my own use ; for none shall be admitted whose souls are not congenial with my own. Here will I dedicate many hours to improvement ; and, thinking on the virtues of my Cecilia, try to imitate them.

The appearance of a Mr. Montague interrupted me this afternoon ; he was at my elbow before I was aware.—What, writing, my charming Miss Lexington ! What happy subject employs your pen ? But I fear I intrude.—Not at all, Sir ; and he seated himself at my feet. I was only scribbling to a friend,

friend, and she may thank you for this interruption; as my scrawl would have proved but stupid; for my thoughts run rather on the melancholy strain to-day. — Perhaps Miss Levison and he took my hand. He paused, — perhaps what Mr. Montague, — I would have said, Madam, — that perhaps your heart sighs for some amiable youth, whom the extensive ocean separates from your view. — You have defined right, Sir. My eyes ardently long to behold a friend whom the sea divides; but that friend is of my own sex.

Happy woman, to possess the esteem of so inestimable a heart! how many would envy your situation! This lady, my dear Madam, must have many rivals.

rivals. Is there no happy man that supplants her? Surely your heart is formed for the more acute feelings of love? He sighed.—You sigh, Mr. Montague; I fear the little blind deity has created some small disturbance in your own bosom; as to myself, I defy his power.

But come, Sir, the company will wonder at our absence, we had as well return. On our entrance into the hall, we met my father, who, having asked where I had been, said, the ladies thought my absence strange, and seemed rather displeased. I entered the drawing-room; the company rallied me on my fondness for solitude, and declared it as their opinion,

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that,

that, were I not in love, I could not prefer the lonely grove to the more enlivening snip-snap snorum; which game they were then playing. Mr. Boswell, a seeming good-natured kind of man, came up to me with a puritanical gravity, and enquired whether I had seen Mr. Montague; I replied, yes, that I had seen him in the hall, and observed that he looked sad.—Alas, answered he, I knew not whether the despairing Strephon had not leaped from yonder cliff.—Why truly, Sir, the foldier is greatly indebted to you for your kind sollicitude. But here he comes; I will inform him of your friendship.—Montague, Boswell has been under great apprehensions upon your account, and has been making

ing

ing many enquiries after you. I told him I saw you this minute in the hall; now, Lieutenant, pray account for your desertion of this good company. He bowed.—Your commands, Miss Levison, I shall ever be happy to obey: the card-table, I thought, might dispense with my attendance; and as I felt an oppression on my stomach, imagined a short walk might be of service in removing the pain.—And your walk, Sir, (said Boswell) was, I hope, of benefit to you. “A ma foi Monsieur Boswell (returned Madame De Blondeau) la jeune homme à bien expliquer. Comment va la santé mon belle soldat.”—Better, thank you, my amiable advocate, said Montague, kissing her hand.—Etes vous las Mon-

sieur?—No, Madam, I did not walk far; I have been enjoying the beauties of Nature in yonder grove.—Il fait fort beau, à ces ombres sont fort agréables?—Enchantingly so. Montague and I now joined in the game, and played till supper. After the cloth was removed (according to custom) singing was proposed. I refused for some time; at length I was prevailed upon, and warbled, “Young Lubin was a Shepherd Boy.” Mr. Montague, who has a most melodious voice, sung, “Beneath a green shade sat a lovely young swain.” At one we retired to our separate apartments; and, not finding the god of sleep favourable to my wishes, have resumed my pen.

You

You will naturally ask me, my friend, who this same hero is, who has so much engrossed my quill, and who dared with impunity break in upon my retirement; I will in as few words as possible inform you.

Augustus Montague is the youngest son of a noble but reduced family. The whole extent of his fortune consists in a lieutenancy. He is about two and twenty; a little above the middle size, and elegantly formed. His face cannot critically ~~be~~ styled beautiful; but there is a nameless something that renders every thing he says or does interesting. His complexion is pale; his eyes blue, shaded with the finest dark fringes I ever beheld; his eye-

H 3

brows

brows delicately arched, his teeth white and regular. In short, my Cecilia, whoever converses with this deserving youth admire him, and cannot withhold from him their friendship. He steals imperceptibly upon their esteem. The whole regiment love him; the soldiers adore him: in short, he is beloved by all who know him.

On reviewing what I have written, I apprehend, Cecilia, you will imagine this amiable man has gained an interest in my breast. But no, my sweet girl; love is a passion, I trust, that will never invade the bosom of thy Laura. The miseries of the fair Eliza have fortified my heart against the shafts of that little urchin Cupid. I esteem, I
feel

feel a friendship for Montague, but my heart is still my own ; and therefore, my love, do not wrong me by suspicions which I do not merit.

My mother is making great preparations against Christmas ; my father having promised a ball to the ladies. In short, for the next week, our house will be so crowded, that I fear I shall not be able to converse with my beloved friend for these ten days ; but this letter shall be dispatched by the first ship that sails for Europe.

Adieu, thou tender companion of my youth : may heaven bless and preserve you, is the prayer of

LAURA LEVISON.

H 4

L E T.

LETTER VIII.

MISS BYNG TO MISS LEVISON.

AND art thou at last caught, my dear Laura? Is thy inflexible heart subdued by the irresistible charms of an Epaulet? Sure, red coats were formed for the destruction of our poor helpless sex! But no, my sweet girl, I wrong you by my unmerited suspicions; you feel only an esteem, a friendship for Montague. Ah! Laura, Laura, beware of deceiving yourself; it is the province of friendship to warn thy sensibility of danger. Yes, my gentle friend, I see innumerable difficulties surrounding this fatal passion.

The cloak you put on was too thin for the prying eye of affection. Your very attempt to deny that Montague has made an interest in your heart, is a convincing proof of your tenderness; besides, my love, you was not always fond of solitude. O! Laura, drive, I beseech you, this cruel intruder from your breast. You are yet a stranger to the repose 'twill rob you of, for I am sure your father will never consent to your union with a man, however amiable, who can boast no other fortune than his sword. You know him to be possessed of an inflexibility of disposition, which will never pardon the least deviation from that duty, which he looks upon as his due; therefore shun the impending danger,
that

that would plant daggers in your dutiful breast, and banish from your remembrance the too charming Augustus. It may not yet be too late to recover your former indifference. I like not Mr. Boswell; my judgment of this gentleman may be premature, I will therefore drop his name and the above subject.

Lady Charlotte Bruce was last month married to Mr. Seymour. I have paid her ladyship the bridal visit. She seems perfectly happy, and Seymour doatingly fond of his giddy bride. I have promised Lady Charlotte to spend a month with her at Seymour-vale this summer; Harriot Sidney is also to be of the party. The sweet girl ever makes the kindest

kindest enquiries after your ladyship; she longs to see you, and wishes to know if you design spending your youth in the Torrid Zone. She wonders at your courage in trusting yourself among such an uncivilized set of people as the Negroes. She declares, she should be in hourly dread and fear of receiving poison mingled in her drink or food. Indeed, Laura, I should in some degree possess her fears, but you are above such mean prejudices.

Harriot was with me the morning I received your letter, containing the history of the unfortunate nun. The sorrows of the fair sufferer beguiled our eyes of their briny fluid, and rendered us ill-calculated to partake of

of the pleasures we had promised ourselves in the evening. Lord Gray has built a pretty little theatre in his park, where the comedy of the Jealous Wife was to be performed. Among the numbers invited Miss Sidney and myself were included. Lady Gray wished me to have taken a character; but, knowing my own incapability, I as politely as possible declined it.

The play went off with prodigious eclat, and was received by a most crowded and brilliant company. The principal parts were performed by Sir William Eagle and Lady, Captain Bostain, Mr. and Miss Mansel. You may judge how highly I was delighted, who know my partiality for theatrical amusements.

An

An actress has this winter made her appearance at Drury-lane theatre, whose amazing powers, like the rising sun, dazzles all beholders. She is at present quite the rage, the *l'Etoile* the English worship. Her patrons even pronounce her superior to Yates, Crawford, and Young; yet, strange as it may appear, this same Mrs. Siddons offered herself six years ago to Garrick, and was refused; what his reason could be, it is impossible to conjecture, as she is undoubtedly a most admirable actress, and plays the most to the feelings, of any woman I ever yet beheld. Her attitudes and actions seem the result of nature, and to proceed from the sensibility of her heart. She has, I think, deservedly received surprising favours
from

110 LAURA AND AUGUSTUS.

from the managers, as well as the public. In short, the Siddons is the general topic of conversation at all tea-tables.

Good-night, my Laura; I feel the drowsy god taking possession of my senses, and warning me that tired nature needs his kind assistance.

Yours sincerely,

CECILIA BYNG.

L E T.

LETTER IX.

Rose-Hill.

LIEUTENANT MONTAGUE TO
CAPTAIN YORK.

BY heavens! York, I can endure this racking uncertainty no longer. My soul, you know, is full of sensibility, formed for all the luxury of the melting passion; but it is equally true, that the sweetest delicacy had ever a place there. Nor could any woman, however fair, however lovely, have gained a place in my heart, whose mind was not cast in the most refined mould of feminine

virtue and sensibility. You can witness for me, York, that whenever the Loves presided at our entertainments, the Graces were not absent, that in the very delirium of pleasure the rapture was chastened, and the transports restrained. I have already, Ned, in a former letter * told you, that I had seen in Miss Levison all that my most sanguine wishes could desire. I told you too, that she was beautiful, that she was amiable. But, O! my friend, I could not tell you the tenth part of her perfections. Her heart is pregnant with the noblest principles; gentleness, and meek-eyed pity, sit enthroned in her lovely bosom.

* The letter referred to is lost.

To describe to you, my friend, the various passions that agitate my distracted soul, when I behold her surrounded by a set of insignificant flatterers, is impossible. One Boswell, in particular (a child of fortune), gives me the greatest uneasiness : alarmed at his assiduities, the other evening I followed my lovely enslaver to her favourite recess, with a full determination to make my love known to her; tho' I doubted not, my eyes, those just interpreters of the mind, had already been the gentle messengers. But a certain awe, ever attendant upon true affection, stopped the utterance of my words, and I returned to the house, without the wished-for relief.

For myself, I am well aware, the world will not be my friend, nor the world's law—interest. They will probably say, that, sensible of my own situation as I must be, master of no greater fortune than an humble lieutenancy, I have acted a base part in seducing the affections of the daughter, while the father entertained me with the greatest kindness at his table, and whose house I made my home. They will probably say, I have violated the laws of friendship; that I have broken through every principle of virtue; and that I have offered an insult to the kind genius of hospitality, the benevolent spirit of good neighbourhood, and the sacred and dignified powers of friendship! I mean not, York, to exculpate

exculpate my conduct, let the fervency of my love plead my excuse. Behold, the fair cause, Ned, of thy friend's misery appears. I see her ascending yonder hill; she goes to meditate the virtues of an absent friend; I will follow her, and with melting, youthful ardour, reveal the secrets of my soul to her gentle bosom. Forgive me, fair Laura, for thus intruding upon your privacy.

IN CONTINUATION.

GIVE me joy, Ned; I have fighed forth my artless tale in the ears of the charming Laura; and she did not disdain to listen to my humble suit.—By my soul, York, I am the happiest of mortals, I seem to tread on air.

The sweet girl at first referred me to her father ; but, when I painted to her the little probability there was of Mr. Levison's consenting to give his lovely daughter to the arms of a needy Lieutenant, she replied, sweetly blushing, " if her father consulted her happiness, he would bestow her hand on worth, and not on wealth."

Heavens ! my friend, what a treasure is this woman ! how disinterested, how every way amiable ! there is an irresistible grace attendant upon her every word and movement. Her soul is the receptacle of every virtue ; how blest will thy Montague be in the possession of so inestimable a jewel !

We

We have agreed to keep our love a profound secret from the family for some time; as I have convinced her, that a separation would immediately follow the discovery.

I have entreated her to make Madame De Blondeau (an amiable French woman), the confidant of our mutual attachment, to which she has consented.

Adieu: when writing to your lovely sister, present my best respects, and believe me to be thy sincere friend—

ANGUSTUS MONTAGUE.

LETTER X.

Rose-Hill.

MISS LEVISON TO MISS BYNG.

O Cecilia, the amiable Augustus has confessed to thy happy friend that she reigns sole mistress of his heart: had you heard the dear engaging youth vow perpetual truth and constancy; you, my sweet girl, no more than Laura could have withstood the insinuating pleader; with blushes I confessed a reciprocal esteem. But, ah! my friend, what happiness is there without its alloy! I am convinced my father will never consent to our union,
know.

knowing his ruling passion to be avarice. Then can I imagine he will ever permit me to bestow myself upon a man in the situation of Montague? Indeed, Cecilia, thy Laura feels; were she deprived of the hopes, that fate would one day bless her with the man she loves, her existence would be rendered insupportable.

With him alone, and only him I'd live,
It's all I ask, and all that heaven can give;
No other object can admittance find,
Whilst his dear bright ideas fill my mind.

Our ball is over; Courtney was my partner. He dances most admirably; grace was in all his steps. We were the only couple that figured in the

Devonshire minuet, and, I assure you, came off with very great applause.

I am now making great preparations against a fete champetre, which the governor gives the ladies on his quitting this island. My dress, I think, will be truly elegant. My petticoat is of whitelustre, a spangled gauze thrown over it, and festooned with wreaths of flowers consisting of roses, myrtle, and sage, fastened with festucous bows round the coat a flounce fringed with silver. The gown to be crape studded with silver stars, and fringed all round with a broad silver fringe; the body to be made of white lustre, the sleeves of spangled gauze drawn to the wrists with flowers twisted round the arm,

fall

sash of tiffany tied with a bunch of roses ; this dress to be worn over a small hoop ; my hair without powder, the front to be pinned up in large curls, the hind hair to hang in loose ringlets about my neck and shoulders ; on one side of my head a turban of white crape, ornamented with a large plume of ostrich feathers.

My amiable Montague has made me promise to figure in an allemande with him. His dress will be no less elegant than mine ; could it be otherwise, when it was Laura's taste ? his waistcoat and breeches are white lustring, the waistcoat wrought in rose-buds, and fastened with bunches of silver ; the knee bands worked as the above, and tied with
rib-

ribbon ; the couleur de feuille morte, a jacket made of the most beautiful rambour muslin lined with white ; his hair, which is of the finest brown, without powder, is to flow in ringlets down his back, loosely tied with the above coloured ribbon. I, laughing, told him, that upon this occasion he must use a little rouge to render him quite irresistible. All our dresses are to be kept secret, that the sight upon meeting may appear more striking : and could but my Cecilia add one to the party, I should think the pleasure of the evening complete. Montague sends to request, I will favour him with the pleasure of my company, in a ramble ; desires I will observe the refulgence of the moon, whose mild

in

influence tempts the evening walk. I will not refuse the artful pleader, as this will be the last evening, in which I shall enjoy his dear society for this fortnight.

The encroaching rogue has been trying to draw me into an epistolary correspondence with him, during his absence. I have, with the fortitude of a hero, denied his request; but, I fear, my resolution will fail the first tender billet I receive from his dear hands. Nay, it would be a breach of politeness, my dear Cecilia, to suffer a friend's letter to remain unanswered.

But

But I must now, my sweet girl, close this scrawl, to keep an appointment I have made. You start, my love ! well you may ; an appointment after the family is retired, has, I confess, a very intriguing sound. But to ease your fears, learn that the assignation is with a female. Madame De Blondeau and I have agreed, attended by our Mulatto women, to bathe in a pretty rivulet, shaded by bamboe and other trees ; this spot is quite retired, and lays at the bottom of the hill, I in a former letter mentioned to you. The foot of man, I believe, scarce ever trod this spot ; and it was by mere chance that I discovered it. You may probably be surpris'd at our temerity, in venturing at so late an hour to so sequestered

tered a place. But I must inform you that its distance from our house does not exceed three hundred yards, and that, so far from apprehending danger in this part of the world, we all sleep with our windows and doors unfastened. My maid reminds me, that it is time for me to depart; so adieu, my charming friend,

Yours,

LAURA LEVISON.

LET-

LETTER XI.

BENJAMIN BOSWELL ESQ. TO
JOHN WILSON.

CONFUSION seize that pale-faced rascal Montague! the fellow has got the start of me. Yes, Wilson, Laura, like most of her silly sex, has been caught by the glare of a red coat. The pennyless dog has gained the heart of the only woman I ever liked well enough to make my wife. While I, like a whining puppy, may sigh and be—By heavens! it shall not be, Laura's person shall be mine, let who will take her heart! I will swear old Levison to secrecy, and then inform him of their romantic love.

love. I have already said enough, to have awakened the suspicions of any man, except such an old droner. I am sure he'll not suffer this sentimental blade to marry his daughter; for the old rogue loves money to his soul. At the same time I give him the above intelligence, I will offer myself as his son-in-law. The sight of my rent-roll will work the old fellow in my favour. In the mean time, I shall take special care, that Madam does not steal a wedding upon us. The dove-like creatures have frequent meetings at a place, the romantic girl calls Orange Grove. This comes of people suffering their children to read those ridiculous books called novels. There is to-night a fete champetre at Beville-

Lodge: I shall request the honour of her hand for the evening; but I suppose the pretty Miss will be engaged to her lover. It does not signify, one evening's pleasure they may enjoy; for I shall be greatly out, if they have many more, thine——

BENJAMIN BOSWELL.

LET.

LETTER XII.

Grenada,

MISS LEVISON TO MISS BYNG.

AT the conclusion of my last letter, my dear Cecilia, I informed you of the design Madame De Blondeau and I had of refreshing ourselves in a cool liquid stream. The night was remarkably fine; the moon shone with uncommon brilliancy, and exactly resembled the following description:

As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light,
When not a breath disturbs the air serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;

VOL. I.

K

Around

Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars, unnumber'd gild the glowing pole;
O'er the dark trees a yellow verdure shed,
And tip with silver every mountain's head :
Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies ;
The conscious mind, admiring at the sight,
Eye the blue vault, and blebs the useful light,—

Just as we had plunged into the
prattling brook, the rustling of the
trees alarmed us : we quitted its gen-
tle current, and, wrapping a loose gown
over us, we stood petrified through
fear. At length a female form ap-
peared, and, falling at our feet, im-
plored protection. Surprized, and
scarce believing the object before us to
be real, we started. The poor wretch,
seeing us retreat, begged us not to be
alarmed, as she meant not to do us any
injury.

injury.—I am, continued the poor creature, unfortunate, but not guilty: do, my dear ladies, let me implore you to listen to my misfortunes. We complied; and, seating ourselves upon the grass, desired her to do the same. Having recovered from our amazement, we had now leisure to reconnoitre the figure before us. She appeared to be about twenty. Want, and sorrow, had worn her to the bone: and, to compleat her wretched aspect, she seemed far advanced in her pregnancy. She was fair, but had not the least trace of beauty. Her dress was clean, but age had worn it thread-bare.

She began her story in the following manner. “I must entreat your pardon,

K 2

ladies,

ladies, for my abrupt intrusion; but the miseries of my situation will, I hope, plead my apology." We told her no excuse was necessary; that the tears of the afflicted ever shared our tenderest sympathy; and therefore, if any thing lay within our power to serve her, she might without ceremony command us. She bowed; thanked us, and proceeded.

"My father possessed a small curacy in Wales: I was the eldest of ten children. At a proper age I was sent to London, and bound apprentice to a relation of my mother's, who kept a capital milliner's shop in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden. Mrs. Busy, who was a good-natured motherly woman,

man, treated me with the greatest kindness, and gave me every indulgence in her power. With her I lived, perfectly content, till about a twelve-month ago, when I became acquainted with one Lucy Jones, a young woman in the neighbourhood, who always appeared a very modest, decent kind of girl. She one day invited me to go to Deptford with her, and spend the day at a relation's, who, she said, lived at that place. She also told me, that it was not unlikely we might dine on board her cousin's ship. She urged me to comply: young and thoughtless, I too readily consented. I gained the permission of my mistress; and early one morning set off with my false friend. As she had predicted, we went

on board. The captain, on various pretences, kept us down in the cabin, supplying us plentifully with wine and punch. Between four and five, I remarked to my companions, that it grew late, and purposed returning on shore. But Lucy laughed in my face, and asked me if I did not know we had been three hours under sail for Jamaica? Lamentations were vain.—Too late, ladies, I found that I had been basely decoyed from my friends, and that Lucy was nothing less than the vile captain's mistress; and, wanting some female companion, had hit upon this expedient to carry me off, and make me as wicked as herself.

“ We

“We had not been on board a week, before that bad man, the captain, entered the state-room allotted me, and used every art to compel me to yield to his brutal desires. The wretch even attempted violence; and I was obliged to lay for three weeks with an open pen-knife by my side. At last, the second mate, pitying my dreadful situation, promised me his protection, provided I would consent to marry him at the first place we could make our escape to. To this proposal I agreed; and by good fortune escaped from Madeira to this island. My husband took a small room in the town of St. George’s, and we procured credit for the few necessaries we wanted, and lived for two months in that way; at

last our creditors insisted upon being paid, or that my husband should go to prison. Alarmed at this, he one night left me while asleep; upon which, they seized the few things that remained, and turned me out to misery and want. A Mr. Wilson offered to maintain me as his mistress. And I was furthermore informed, if I did not comply with this offer, I should be taken up and thrown into jail. Terrified at this threat, I fled; and chance bringing me to this spot, the watch belonging to this cane-piece received me to his hospitable hut. I swore the faithful negro to secrecy; which he has, I find, most religiously preserved. I have dragged on five months in this gloomy retreat,

partaking of this poor creature's allowance, and the produce of his little garden. But thoughts of the dreadful hour which now approaches, and the idea of what must be the fate of the helpless innocent I carry about me, determined me to apply to Mrs. Levison, to whose husband I am told this plantation belonged." On speaking of her fatherless babe, she shed a torrent of tears. We soothed the unfortunate girl, and promised to have her provided for. I would have had the unhappy creature return home with me that night, but she begged to be excused, till she knew whether it might be agreeable to my family.

The

The next morning I related her pitiable tale to my mother, who fortunately wanting an upper-servant, her own being obliged to return to England for the recovery of her health, agreed to receive her in that capacity. The unfortunate woman is now with us, and seems well calculated for the place she is in. Should the child live, I mean to take it under my own protection.

We have since made enquiries after the wicked captain, and his vile associates, and have heard that the wretch, and all his crew, perished in that unfortunate hurricane which happened in the year 1781. Do not these circumstances, my dear Cecilia, shew the
work-

workings of an all-wise Providence? Great God! how uncertain are all the enjoyments of this life! Short-sighted mortals! how vain are all your earthly pursuits. To-day, you probably are planning how you may acquire wealth and fame; or perhaps flattering yourselves with the idea of enjoying years of bliss, with the object of your tenderest affections; likely ye are using every art to ensnare unwary innocence, when perhaps in the very moment that ye think success will crown your wishes, the sharpened scythe of death, with one blow, levels you to the earth. O, my friend! how prepared ought we all to be, to meet the summons of so grim a tyrant! People in general are too apt to put off
the

the hour of reflection till too late; and instead of accustoming themselves to look upon the grave as the necessary appendage to mortality, they seem to live but to pleasure, and forget that the extinction of life is a debt we must all one time or other pay.

Let not you and I, my Cecilia, follow the example of the world; but by frequently using ourselves to reflect upon futurity, learn to behold the grave divested of its terrors; and, dying as Christians, say, “O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!”—Thy sincere

LAURA LEVISON.

L E T.

L E T T E R XIII.

MISS LEVISON TO MISS BYNG.

YESTERDAY, my dear Cecilia, was the appointed day for the fete champetre, given by Governor H—: the elegance of the entertainment exceeds all description; nature and art seemed to vie with each other in this rural entertainment; and I might with truth have ranked that evening as the most agreeable I have known since I quitted Europe, had it not been interrupted by the continual presence of Mr. Boswell, who followed me like my shadow. Indeed, Cecilia, I fear I shall find him an unlucky acquaintance.

quaintance. Do not impute what I am about to say to vanity ; but I apprehend that, in him, I shall find an obstinate lover. Ah ! my friend, what will become of me, if my suspicions prove well-founded ? Alas ! I tremble ; a summons to attend my father obliges me to lay aside my pen for the present.

IN CONTINUATION.

WITH a trembling hand, and anxiously beating heart ! my Cecilia, I sit down, to entreat your friendly advice. I am in the most cruel state imaginable. Mr. Boswell has, as I feared, made proposals to my father in my favour ; his offers were too
great

great to admit of a refusal, four thousand a year was not to be rejected; and my father has laid his injunctions on me, to prepare to listen to his addresses. I pleaded my youth, and disinclination to change my state. But to no purpose, his commands were absolute. What course was I to take, duty and love at variance? I wrote to Montague, desiring him to meet me in the dusk of the evening, at the Orange Grove. He was punctual to the appointment; I told him my situation, and wept; he tried to raise up the kind deceiver Hope. "Thy father, my dear Laura," (said the lovely youth) "can never remain inflexible to our united tears; nature will prove an advocate in our cause."—He ceased.—

O!

O! Montague, my father will never consent, avarice is his ruling passion. In short, the amiable man entreated, should my parent prove obdurate, and insist upon my marrying Boswell, that I would consent to bless him by sharing his little income. "It is true, my Laura," continued he, "the pay of a Lieutenant is not worthy your acceptance, and the splendid offer you reject. But, my sweet love, what we want in gold shall be made up in mutual affection. Perhaps fortune may smile; I have some powerful friends, who will use their interest for my promotion. In the mean time, love, my sweet maid, shall be the sauce to our homely meal; the sweet exchange of tenderness shall beguile the lone retirement.

These

These, and such like arguments, does my charming Augustus use, to persuade his Laura to what her heart is already but too well inclined.

But think not, my Cecilia, that thy friend is possessed of so little pride, or that she is so little mistress of her passion, as to prove a burthen to the man she loves. No, Montague shall never receive my hand, without it can bring with it a fortune worthy his acceptance. But, at the same time, I make this resolution: I solemnly swear, no power on earth, shall force me to unite myself with any other; heaven has witnessed our vows of constancy, and they are registered above. And can I then with impunity think of violat-

ing that vow? Impossible! I feel, my friend, I have much to suffer. But there is no calamity, which I cannot endure without murmuring, while I possess the heart of my Augustus, and health plays upon his benevolent features. However, my lot will be soon determined, as Montague is to wait upon my father to-morrow; till which time I will quit my pen, and try to amuse myself with music. But I fear, I shall say, with Almeria, “Am I more senseless grown than trees, or flint? O! force of constant love! Tis not in harmony to calm my griefs.”

The dye is cast: Montague is forbid these doors, and I am doomed to perpetual wretchedness! My cruel father
treated

treated the deserving youth in the most outrageous manner. On my Augustus's departure, he flew to me; and upbraided me in the most indecent language, his passion could invent! To this harsh treatment, I am persuaded, he has been urged on by some foe to my repose. I suspect Boswell: God forgive me, if I do him wrong! But my reason for suspecting him is, that an old Mulatto, who waited upon me when a child, and is now one of my attendants, over-heard Mr. Boswell and his servant Joe in deep conversation; when she heard the above gentleman damn Montague, and desire his man to keep a good look-out. She further says, that Joe has lately been very flush of money. Upon her relating

L 2

these

these circumstances, I recollected to have seen this same Negroe, frequently walking about the Grove and the door of my chamber, but never till now entertained the least doubt of him. In order to elude this Argus, I have written to Montague, to meet me, when the family is all retired to rest, at the hut where the unfortunate Jenny resided so many months; as, I think, I can depend upon the fidelity of the old watchman, who so humanely assisted her in her distress. I have also sent to request Madame De Blondeau to come and stay with me a few days; she is a worthy creature, and will sincerely sympathise in my sorrows. As to my mother, you know she never dared to contradict her husband;

band ; he ever ruled with tyrant sway ;
and she, poor woman, must bow obedience under the rod of Lordly Man. I have often commiserated her fate, in being yoked to so tyrannical a being. But she, dear good creature, bears her lot with the fortitude of a martyr.

I hear my father's voice : he may probably take it into his head to pay me a visit. I will therefore put an end to this letter, with assuring you, how sincerely — —

I am my dear Cecilia's

LAURA LEVISON.

L 3

LET-

LETTER XIV.

St. George's —

LIEUTENANT MONTAGUE TO MISS
LEVISON.

Heaven first taught letters, for some wretch's aid,
Some banish'd lover, or some captive maid.

They live, they speak, they breathe, what love
inspires,

Warm from the fowl, and faithful to its fires.

POPE'S Eloise.

YES, my Laura, who could support the heart-rending separation, the cruel absence from all that is dear on earth, were it not for the soft consolation attending an epistolary intercourse? It is this alone, my amiable, my adorable maid, that can support thy Augustus in his dreadful banishment.

O, Miss Levison, life without thee would be an insupportable burden; existence would become the greatest of misfortunes, and the world appear desolate.

But two days expired since Mr. Levison's cruel prohibition, and I already begin to ——— the tardy minutes. But how shall I tell my angelic Laura the state of my mind, when I consider the situation in which I have left her, exposed to the arts and assiduities of a man countenanced by her father, and backed by his authority? Fear, hope, despair, and grief, alternate reign in my breast, rack my fond heart, and torture every vein. And, were it not for the exalted idea I have of the deli-

cacy and nobleness of your sentiments, distraction would succeed.

O, Laura! why will you not consent to our immediate union? We have enough, my sweet love, with œconomy, to procure us the necessaries of life. What need have we for its superfluities? Whatever is wanting, shall be amply supplied by the most endearing marks of tender love and affection. Yes, my charming maid, the business of thy Montigue's life shall be to obliterate from thy remembrance those advantages of fortune thou hast so generously scorned for his sake.

I have been so hurried, my dearest life, since my arrival in this town,
that

that what with the heat of the weather, which is rendered still more intense by the proximity of the buildings, and the agitation of my mind, symptoms of a feverish disposition seem hovering about me. But do not let what I have said make you uneasy; for, be assured, my illness is too trifling to merit even a thought.

I owe much to the tenderness of Mrs. Christian, at whose house I am now a resident.

Governor Willis is arrived, and keeps mighty state, and levees. The H——, C——, and Party, with their families, took up their quarters in town above three weeks before his arrival,

rival, in order to secure him when he did arrive : accordingly they penned the poor man up in Melvil's band-box, until, for want of air, and an opportunity to breathe, he was obliged to beg the privilege of two days to himself and family ; and that in future his flag would fly when he was in a disposition to be teased, or to receive their adorations.

This has hurt their pride ; he keeps all at an equal distance ; is determined to execute his master's instructions ; and, as his powers are absolute over the council, they are reduced to a state of uncertainty, whether to acquiesce or rebel. I, you know, was obliged to make my bow in the circle, and like
him

him much; he seems a well-bred sensible man. I wish much to know how Mr. Levison will conduct himself towards him. Your father, you are sensible, is a wonderful politician. I have been told he was heard to say, that he should give him very little trouble for a long time, unless called upon by duty in a public capacity. You see, Laura, how I communicate politics to you.

I have little to say to you now, my dearest love, unless I were to renew the subject always nearest my heart, and which I could ever dwell upon, but am prevented by the messenger, who waits to convey this to your fair hands.

It is impossible to express my anxiety, to hear how you go on at Rose Hill. But I doubt not your goodness will lead you to soften the anguish of my mind, by a few lines to him who, with pleasure, subscribes himself your faithfully-devoted

AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE.

L E T.

LETTER XV.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

TEN thousand thanks to my lovely inflaver for her charming letter, which came most opportunely, to revive my drooping strength. It proved the best restorative, that had yet been administered to your Augustus. Faint, and languishing, I lay upon the bed of sickness: the servant entered, he delivered me a letter, the superscription of which bespoke the writer; I pressed it to my beating heart; and imprinted a hundred kisses on the dear contents.—O! my beloved Laura, how shall I be able to repay such a world of goodness! who am a
bank-

bankrupt in every thing but love! You, and only you, most lovely of your sex, are the sole arbiter of my fate! On your smiles depend my very existence; Laura is mistress of my every action, possesses every thought.

If virtue were to take a human form,
To light it with her smiles and nameless grace,
O! she would chuse the person of my love.

Yesterday I had like to have made my exit in a very foolish manner. I have for some time made a practice of drinking cream of tartar whey one morning in the week; and, by some mistake, between the Doctor and my man Thomas, he put about one hundred and fifty grains of tartar emetic into a pint of milk and water, all of which I drank off,

off, except about a half spoonful, which Mrs. Christian took when she was sweetening it with manna, and which had nearly done her business. It operated about an hour before I suspected any mistake; and, thanks to a noble constitution, and a happy resolution, it wrought itself off by noon, but not before it had thrown me into convulsions, and cramp; my extremities were cold and chilled; and it was a miracle I got over it. It has demolished my throat and bowels, and I have still smart twitches of the cramp. However, experience will teach me for the future to avoid any more mistakes of the kind.

I must lay by my pen until to-morrow, as my strength is not sufficiently
esta-

established, to permit me to relate an anecdote of your father which happened the other day; and as I wish not to dispatch this till I can with certainty inform you of the evening on which I shall visit the good old Negroe's hut, with the pleasing expectation of once more beholding my adorable maid.

END OF VOL. I.



